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DE RUEHME #1310/01 0682141
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9555
INFO RUEHX/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 2196

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 001310

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PREL MX

SUBJECT: AGAINST THE WALL: US AND MEXICAN CONGRESSMEMBERS
DISCUSS BORDER SECURITY AND COOPERATION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: During the 45th U.S.-Mexico Interparliamentary (IPG) meeting members of Congress from both countries exchanged perspectives on border security and migration. The Mexican delegation stressed shared responsibility for border matters and the contribution Mexican migrants make to the U.S. economy. They presented copies of a concurrent resolution passed by both houses entitled "Mexico and the Migrant Phenomenon," which notes that if enough work visas become available, Mexico will take steps to ensure that migration north takes place through legal crossing points. The U.S. delegation lauded Mexico's willingness to provide greater security along the border, but was frank about low chances for amnesty. Both sides agreed that NADBank should be reviewed and reformed, but not abolished. They seemed to agree on the utility of including Canada in a trilateral IPG, although the mechanism for doing so wasn't clear. The meeting, the last for this Mexican delegation, was extremely cordial on all sides, and Mexican members of Congress told us they were quite pleased with the U.S. delegation's manner and message. Mexican co-chair Emilio Chuayffet (PRI) announced the government of Mexico would present an award to retiring Rep. Jim Kolbe for his contributions to the IPG. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) While during the run-up to the IPG some press tried to suggest the meeting would be confrontational over sensitive issues like border security and migration, in fact it was conducted throughout in a very collegial manner that left the Mexican delegation extremely pleased. The opening ceremony set the tone with polite remarks by PRI heavyweight Emilio Chuayffet matched by Rep. Kolbe's reflections on the positive evolution of the IPG over the many years he has participated. Sen. Silvia Hernandez (PRI) stressed that mutual problems need solutions reached through mutual discussion and agreement. Senator Cornyn focused on the positive development of the Congress-to-Congress dialogue over time as a means to bridge differences. While press continued throughout the session to try and stir controversy, the meeting continued in the cordial tone set by the four co-chairs.

Migration and Border Security

¶3. (SBU) The Mexicans leaned forward on the migration discussion, highlighting the concurrent resolution on "Mexico and the Migration Phenomenon", passed by both houses on February 16, 2006. The resolution includes Mexican obligations to ensure migration passes through legal crossings in the event that enough work visas become available, as well as its obligations to treat (illegal) migrants inside Mexico with respect and consideration. Dep. Garcia Ochoa (PRD) emphasized that with over one million crossings a day, illegal crossings were a small fraction of a very successful border. Sen. Oscar Luebert echoed a familiar refrain by saying walls won't work to stop

migration. Rep. Manzullo noted migration was Mexico's problem too -- its citizens were seeing their future in another country. Dep. Jimenez commented that the U.S. will still need workers. Rep. Manzullo added that there was no way an amnesty program would pass in the U.S.

¶4. (SBU) The migration discussion overlapped with the conversation on border security. Dep. Jimenez (PRI) highlighted the March 3 signing between Secretaries Chertoff and Abascal of the Action Plan Against Border Violence, saying this reflected Mexico's growing acceptance of its responsibility for border security. Sen. Osuna (who is from Tijuana) stressed that contraband flows both ways through border tunnels, and that law enforcement and communities on both sides confronted the corrosive influence of illegal gangs moving weapons, drugs, and people. Dep. Cortes (PAN) noted that Mexico had recently strengthened southern border measures after a trilateral meeting with Guatemala and Belize. The Mexicans also presented an "Integral Migratory Policy Proposal for the Mexican Southern Border" prepared by the National Migration Institute (INM). In response to several Mexican comments, Sen. Cornyn noted that the "wall" was a misconception, and was distracting attention from some of the real issues. Rep. McCaul noted 42 American citizens had been kidnapped in Nuevo Laredo in the last year. He added that the alleged military incursion at Neely Crossing, Texas, while in the end NOT involving Mexican military, did highlight the calm with which Mexican drug cartels operated in broad daylight along the border -- with no Mexican law enforcement response. Sen. Jeffery Jones (PAN) followed up on this point, saying that better communication between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies would help both respond faster and more reliably in these situations. Rep. Davis then raised the OASISS program (investigative cooperation between US and Mexican agencies to permit Mexican prosecution

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of human smugglers) as one success we should not overlook.

Mysteries of the SPP

¶5. (SBU) Mexican congressmembers from the PRD, CD and PT took the opportunity to stress that the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) was not well known or understood inside the congress, much less amongst the greater population. PRD Deputy Garcia Ochoa suggested the three governments should make a greater effort to vest their citizens in SPP. PRD Senator Cardenas was more critical, saying he saw no plan or blueprint for progress under SPP, and thought there should be a role for the three congresses in its evolution. Dep. Schmal said he had no idea what the SPP was about, and wondered what the three heads of state would discuss in Cancun at the end of the month.

NADBANK Should Remain

¶6. (SBU) Sen. Luebbert (PRI) raised his concern that both executive branches were discussing closing NADBANK. This would be a mistake he said, a position seconded by many on the Mexican delegation. Rep. Kolbe said he understood it was Mexico's proposal to close NADBANK and said the issue was under review for this year's budget. After several more Mexican delegation members stressed their support for continuation of NADBANK, Kolbe said in his summation of the proceedings that he would suggest NADBANK needs to be re-examined by both countries with an eye toward improving it rather than abolishing it.

All-American Canal, NAFTA, Awards and Next Steps

¶7. (SBU) The Mexican delegation raised its concern over the lining of the All-American Canal, the need to re-open discussions about corn and bean market liberalization under NAFTA, and its strong desire to have additional congressional mechanisms for dialogue on the range of issues covered by the IPG. They discussed forming a "Mixed Commission,"

trilateralizing the IPG by adding Canada, and/or a series of topic-specific working groups. There was some consensus that adding Canada to the IPG would be useful, although also some confusion about the mechanism to do this. In a gesture that characterized the warm nature of the conversations throughout, Dep. Chuayffet announced that the Mexican Government would bestow a medal on retiring Rep. Kolbe for his contributions to the IPG over the years.

¶ 8. (SBU) Comment: Given the strident nature of Mexican congressional denunciations of "the wall" and the Sensenbrenner Bill in general, it was remarkable how genuinely friendly and collegial the IPG conversations were. Mexican congressmembers told us they were delighted with the tone and substance of the talks. Mexican press highlighted Rep. Kolbe's opposition to the wall, but despite its best efforts was unable to generate friction between the two sides. This was the last IPG for the Mexican delegation (although several members may switch to the other house after July elections, and will no doubt be back), and they clearly felt proud of their role in the bilateral congressional exchange.

¶ 9. Ambassador Garza and Mexican Ambassador to the U.S. de Icaza were honored observers at the IPG. The formal delegations were:

US delegation

Senator John Cornyn (R-TX)
Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT)

Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-AZ)
Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX)
Rep. David Dreier (R-CA)
Rep. Don Manzullo (R-IL)
Rep. Jerry Weller (R-IL)
Rep. Luis Fortuno (R-PR)
Rep. Phil English (R-PA)
Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA)
Rep. William Delahunt (D-MA)
Rep. Eni Faleomavaega (D-AS)

Mexican delegation

Sen. Silvia Hernandez (PRI)
Sen. Oscar Luebbert (PRI)
Sen. German Sierra Sahcnez (PRI)
Sen. Hector Osuna (PAN)
Sen. Carlos Villalobos Organista (PAN)
Sen. Jeffrey Jones (PAN)

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Sen. Veronica Velasco (PVEM)
Sen. Raymundo Cardenas (PRD)

Dep. Emilio Chuayffet (PRI)
Dep. Elena Martinez (PRI)
Dep. Raul Pompa Victoria (PRI)
Dep. Francisco Suarez y Davila (PRI)
Dep. Carlos Jimenez Macias (PRI)
Dep. Adriana Gonzalez (PAN)
Dep. Rodrigo Ivan Cortes Jimenez (PAN)
Dep. Juan Jose Garcia Ochoa (PRD)
Dep. Jorge Martinez Ramos (PRD)
Dep. Jesus Gonzalez Schmal (CD)
Dep. Pedro Vazquez Gonzalez (PT)
Dep. Jorge Kahwagi (PVEM)

GARZA